

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1. (Original) A splicing member for splicing optical fibers each having a bare fiber coated with a buffer coating, comprising:

    a joint element for retaining the bare fibers in a state in which the bare fibers are butt-jointed against each other;

    a jacket including an element storage part for storing the joint element, optical fiber passages for guiding the optical fibers to end parts of the joint element stored in the element storage part respectively, and buffer retainers for opposing to the buffer coatings of the optical fibers when the optical fibers are extended along the optical fiber passages; and

    pressing parts for pressing the buffer retainers to the buffer coatings of the optical fibers when the optical fibers are extended along the optical fiber passages.

Claim 2. (Original) A splicing member for splicing optical fibers, comprising:

    a joint element for retaining bare fibers of two optical fibers each having the bare fiber coated with a buffer coating in a state in which the bare fibers are butt-jointed against each other;

    a jacket including an element storage part for storing the joint element, and optical fiber passages for guiding the optical fibers to end parts of the joint element stored in the element storage part respectively;

    buffer retainers constituted integrally with the jacket for opposing to the buffer coatings of the optical fibers when the optical fibers are extended along the optical fiber passages; and

    a cap mounted to the jacket and moveable in an orthogonal direction to an extension direction of the optical fibers when the optical fibers are extended in the optical fiber passages, and including a cap body, a holding part formed to the cap body to be engaged with the joint element stored in the element storage part through movement of the cap in the orthogonal direction for causing the joint element to retain the bare fibers, and pressing parts formed to the

cap body for pressing the buffer retainers to the buffer coatings through the movement of the cap in the orthogonal direction.

Claim 3. (Original) The optical fiber splicing member according to Claim 2, in which each of the buffer retainers has a first tongue-shaped member extending in the extension direction, and an engagement part formed to the first tongue-shaped member in a manner engageable with the pressing part for moving the first tongue-shaped member towards the buffer coating through the movement of the cap in the orthogonal direction.

Claim 4. (Original) The optical fiber splicing member according to Claim 3, wherein each of the pressing parts of the cap includes a first projecting member which is to project from the cap body in the orthogonal direction, and wherein the engagement part includes a second projecting member which comes in contact with the first projecting member to move the first tongue-shaped member towards the buffer coating by movement of the first projecting member in the orthogonal direction.

Claim 5. (Original) The optical fiber splicing member according to Claim 2, wherein each of the pressing parts of the cap includes a first projecting member which is to project from the cap body in the orthogonal direction, while each of the buffer retainers includes a second tongue-shaped member extending in the extension direction which comes in touch with the first projecting member to move towards the buffer coating by movement of the first projecting member in the orthogonal direction.

Claim 6. (Currently amended) The optical fiber splicing member according to ~~any one of~~ ~~Claims~~ Claim 2 through 5, wherein the jacket includes end plug storage parts formed to both ends thereof, and wherein further comprising:

end plugs that include the buffer retainers and that extend in the same direction as the direction of the optical fiber passages while constituted integrally with the jacket by being fitted in the end plug storage parts.